

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee

My name is Christy Dighans and I am a resident of Montana. I am here today because I am opposed to the enactment of breed-specific legislation. I am a responsible owner of three dogs and three cats.

One of my dogs falls under the "Physical Characteristics" of a Pit Bull. We think she is a cross of Neo Mastiff and Pit Bull but because of this "Proposed Bill" she would be consider a bad dog. She was rescued in Seattle WA. Both she and her brother are good dogs. They live with other family dogs and cats and are routinely exposed to all types of animals.

I understand why some people would want this bill passed. In CA we had a neighbor that trained Pit Bulls for fighting. Animal Control would not enter our backyard to remove those dogs when they challenged both my Parents and our dogs

When working in Bozeman, a couple and their family were staying at the Motel because their 18 month old daughter was attacked by their reserved and ever-faithful dog. This little girl had to have 220 stitches to put her face back together and lost an eye. The dog was a 6 year old Cocker Spaniel. Is this a vicious breed or a possible vicious dog?

For example, Chows, Rottweilers, Dobermans, German Shepherds and Pit Bulls individuals of these breeds have been trained as services dogs, but all can be trained inappropriately and have been known to attack and bite. Should these dogs be considered vicious breeds needing legislation? If that is the case most breeds would need to be banned. There is no breed that has not attacked or actually bitten a person and/or other dogs.

While at the Vet on Monday and a German Shepherd tried to attack my dog. The owner could barely hold on to this dog and the Techs were afraid that her dog would try to bite her. I had to remove my dog from the building until this dog was moved into a room. My dog never showed any signs of aggression or even barked back. So, should my dog have to be muzzled and tagged as a vicious dog? Or should all German Shepherds be banned because they are a vicious breed just because of behavior of a few dogs?

Breed-specific legislation is an ineffective solution because it fails to address the heart of the issue—irresponsible ownership. Responsible owners will be unfairly punished by this legislation, and many well-behaved dogs will be needlessly targeted. Meanwhile, irresponsible owners will continue to make problems for their communities regardless of whether this breed is banned by legislation. Would it not be better for all concerned to continue to concentrate on animal control efforts for irresponsible owners who do not care for or control their dogs, and on individual dogs whose behavior demonstrates that they are a problem. This will ensure that all well-behaved dogs of this targeted breed will not be exterminated needlessly by the State of Montana.

Members of the Committee, you have never seen anything more pathetic as a love sick, 80lb dog standing next to a 1500lb horse kissing each other through the fence. These two played with each other and called to each other if one was not near. So, I am sorry if I take offense that someone wants to tag my dog as a dangerous breed and require me to muzzle her when she is off my property.

I respectfully ask that you support responsible dog owners by opposing any breed-specific legislation.

Christy Dighans, East Helena, MT